

Additional FAQs – 09/15/05

Is WFAA a rehash of the DHS and DoD personnel systems?

- No. The proposed new rules in the draft bill are not the same as those being implemented at DHS and DoD. There are few proposed changes to collective bargaining, adverse actions and appeals, and an agency must demonstrate its readiness for change before it is allowed to adopt the new pay rules.

Isn't emphasizing individual performance going to lead to backstabbing and lack of collegiality in the workplace?

- No. Managers will be trained to rate employees based on clear criteria, which can include how well an employee is working and cooperating as a member of a group. Also, managers can set clear goals for team success and give everyone a stake in reaching those shared goals.

Both DHS and the DoD systems are subject to lawsuits by the unions. Won't WFAA trigger the same kind of litigation?

- We do not believe so. The provisions of the DoD and DHS systems that are the subject of the current lawsuits are not a part of the draft WFAA legislation.

Isn't this a rehash of the Merit Pay System and Performance Management and Recognition System – both of which were failures?

- No. WFAA's pay system is very different from the Merit Pay System (MPS) and the Performance Management and Recognition System (PMRS). Under WFAA an agency can adopt the new pay rules only when it has demonstrated its readiness for change. MPS/PMRS covered all GS-13–15 supervisors and management officials, whether the agency was ready or not. WFAA changes the classification system to eliminate the obsolete General Schedule grades with their 30% pay ranges. WFAA requires agencies to fund performance pay increases, but avoids using the rules and limits that caused problems for PMRS and led to its sunset in 1993.

When MPS and PMRS started, agencies and employees had very little experience appraising performance. Innovations like locality pay or demonstration projects had not yet happened, so people were not ready to accept a situation where everyone would not be paid exactly the same. All base pay changes for senior executives now must also be performance based, which wasn't true when MPS/PMRS were in place.

Why shouldn't pay and the design of these new systems be subject to collective bargaining?

- Because it would result in thousands of pay systems across Government – an impossibility to administer – and could create unreasonable disparities in the way employees are treated.

Will political appointees be subject to the same annual performance evaluations as the career staff? Will political's performance be reviewed, and will their pay increases be influenced, in the same manner?

- Political appointees in Senior Executive Service positions already are subject to the same annual performance appraisal and pay determination process as career senior executives in similar positions. Under WFAA, Schedule C appointees currently covered by the General Schedule and other similar pay systems will be subject to the same annual performance appraisal and pay determination process as career employees in similar positions.

Isn't this just a redistribution of money, i.e., aren't you taking the same pool of money and giving more to some and less to others, thereby creating "winners" and "losers"?

- No. This bill is about providing each employee a manager who is held accountable for helping them be successful, and more recognition and reward than those who do not perform as well as they.

How do you ensure you have enough money to pay the "winners"?

- Agencies must fund the performance pay increases for the first 5 years with at least as much money as had been spent in the past. After that, OPM would set a minimum agencies must spend on those increases.

Won't workers near retirement resist this change? Why should they be for a change, after all these years under the GS? Will the new system affect their retirement?

- WFAA doesn't change anything about retirement. Employees near retirement typically are in one of the top steps of the grade, where they currently have to wait 3 years for their next step increase. Under WFAA, however, every employee whose performance is Fully Successful or better would be eligible for a performance-based pay increase every year, on top of their market-based adjustments. In addition, employees who are near the top of their current grade could be placed in a new band that has greater pay potential.